



**McGregor W. Scott**  
United States Attorney  
Eastern District of California

*Sacramento*  
501 I. Street, Ste 10-100  
Sacramento CA 95814  
Tel (916) 554-2700  
TTY (916) 554-2855

**NEWS RELEASE**

*Fresno*  
2500 Tulare St., Suite 4401  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Tel (559) 497-4000  
TTY (559) 497-4500

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Contact: Rosemary Shaul, 916-554-2802  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae>

**FEDERAL EMPLOYEE INDICTED FOR  
DEFRAUDING CO-WORKERS OF ANNUAL LEAVE**

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that ROBERT JOSEPH THOM, 45, of Escondido, California, was indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury on ten counts of wire fraud. The case has been assigned to United States District Judge Edward J. Garcia.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Office of the Inspector General, United States Department of Interior.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Rodriguez, who is prosecuting the case, THOM was employed as an information technology specialist at the United States Geological Survey in Southern California, an executive branch agency under the United States Department of Interior, since June 2004. The United States Geological Survey Western Region Headquarters Office is located in Sacramento. The indictment alleges that THOM submitted false documents about his medical condition to the United States Geological Survey Headquarters Office in order to apply to the federal voluntary leave transfer program. The United States Geological Survey, having been misled by THOM's false medical documents, placed THOM on the federal agency's national list from Dec. 14, 2006 to August 23, 2007, to receive donations of annual leave time from other federal employees. The indictment alleges that in the medical documents THOM submitted, he stated that he had undergone "multiple urgent surgeries" for malignant cancer. The indictment also alleges that THOM submitted false periodic progress reports concerning his post-surgery recovery including that, per doctor orders, he needed more time off work to "remain home" and "get plenty of rest." According to court documents, based on THOM's nation-wide plea for help in the form of donated annual leave, 30 United States Geological Survey employees, including at least ten outside of California, donated 995 hours of annual leave (with a value in excess of \$40,550.24) so that THOM could continue to receive a federal government salary and benefits.

THOM was arrested in San Diego on August 23, 2007. THOM's next hearing is scheduled in United States District Court in San Diego, on October 11, 2007, to set dates for THOM's appearance in federal district court in Sacramento.

THOM faces up to 20 years imprisonment for each wire fraud charge. Further, he is subject to an order of restitution, a substantial fine, and a three year term of supervision. However, the actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The charges are only allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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